

FEEDBACK:

06 May 2020



FEEDBACK ON THE COVID-19 EDUCATION CONSULTATIVE GATHERING MEETING OF THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION AND CIVIL SOCIETY

PURPOSE OF THE VIRTUAL GATHERING

On 22 April 2020, a virtual meeting involving over 80 individuals gathered to hear first-hand from the Department of Basic Education the plans being put in place to support learners and teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic period.

The virtual meeting was hosted by the Minister of Department Basic of Education. It was organised by the NECT in collaboration with the National Association of Social Change Entities (NASCEE), a network of the education NGOs, funding partners and individuals who work with the education sector to improve education. Thirty-eight organisations that support education in curriculum delivery, psychosocial aspects, and teacher training took part in the meeting. In his opening remarks, Mr Sizwe Nxasana, the Chairman of the NECT said: 'We live in very challenging and unprecedented times and it has been pleasing to see that the government is doing a lot to make sure that the vulnerable and the poor are taken care of.' He further said that it was important that there should be a briefing session to share information with stakeholders on what is being done and to give people the opportunity to ask questions and make comments.

This meeting followed a commendable, sense of decisiveness, courage and cooperation demonstrated by the State President and the cabinet in the past months. As may be attested by many of us, government's strategy and its communication have been clear, empathetic and sufficient; more so given the incremental use of African languages during the announcements. The Minister of Health, Dr Zweli Mkhize displayed extraordinary leadership – a sense of commitment, effort and the wisdom, particularly his and the cabinet's embrace of an evidence-based approach which distinguishes us from most nations in the world, and from our own dim historical moments. The singular focus of the cabinet on our people, particularly the poor and less advantaged is commendable.

Singular focus of the cabinet on our people, majority of whom are poor and vulnerable

AN EDUCATION LENS TO COVID-19

The Director General of the DBE kicked off the meeting by laying out the global dynamics of COVID-19 and the outbreak and projections on our shores. In his words, 'the COVID-19 Pandemic is on track to surpass the impact of catastrophic events such as World War II and epidemics such as Ebola and SARS'. He took the position that the COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented from a health, economic, employment perspectives; and not least its potential impact on 10 million of our children who depend on schools for nutrition. The learning progress of 13 million of the school going children will be impacted in a significant way.

THE RESPONSIVE APPROACH

The following include guidance for Childcare facilities and schools on preventing the spread of the virus; management of cases in a childcare facility or school and procedures for Heads of Departments and Supervisors on COVID-19.

In the school calendar year that started on 15 January 2020 expected to end on 4 December 2020; we have already lost teaching time. The DBE would explore ways of minimising the losses in this regard and ensure that final exams are catered for at the end of the year.

The Department anticipates that due to losses and trauma experienced through COVID 19, there will be increased social, mental, psychological and emotional difficulties amongst learners, educators and officials. Therefore support has been secured from the Psychosocial Support Services of the Departments of Social Development and Health.

THE CHALLENGE



THREE MILLION
PEOPLE ARE INFECTED
GLOBALLY



**BALANCE THE
EFFECTS**
OF POVERTY AND THE VIRUS



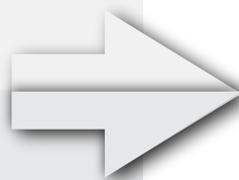
DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH
DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

**MANAGED
SCHOOLING**



LARGE SCHOOLING SYSTEMS

25 MILLION SCHOOLS
13 MILLION LEARNERS



THE RESPONSE



GUIDELINES
FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING



SCREENING
PROGRAMME



INFRASTRUCTURE
UPDATES



PROCEDURAL INTERVENTION
STANDARD
OPERATION PROCEDURES



**SCHOOL
TRANSPORT**
PROCEDURES



NEW PROVISIONS FOR
TRANSPORT



TRAINING OF SCHOOLS ON
NEW SOPs



PROPOSED SCHOOL
CALENDAR



CURRICULUM
RECOVERY PLAN



PHYCHO
SOCIAL SUPPORT



COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT



TAKING ADVANTAGE OF ICT
TO MAINTAIN LEARNING
FROM HOME

THE OPPORTUNITIES



EVIDENCE-LED
DECISIONS BY CABINETS



QUICK AND COURAGEOUS
REACTION



PROPERLY LAYERED SYSTEM

70 DISTRICTS
950 CIRCUITS
444 EDUCATORS

AGILE RESPONSES FROM THE NON-GOVERNMENT SECTOR

Dr James Keevy and Gail Campbell, representing NASCEE, presented impressive, wide-ranging initiatives that NGOs, universities and a education funding partners have started to support the educational responses to the COVID-19. It was noted that entities in the education sector have moved swiftly to respond to the sector's needs and used this opportunity to work closely together. A call has been sounded by NASCEE for non-governmental players to organize themselves into a coalition to avoid duplication of efforts and ineffective use of limited resources.

The following six key activities highlight what NGOs have initiated during the COVID-19 lockdown period:

- NASCEE has been working with RMB on a web-based platform that can help map the activities of NGOs in the education sector and link these activities to funders.
- A national compact has been developed across education NGOs around the coordination and collaboration of these organisations during the pandemic.
- Coordinating the curation of online and offline learning content.
- Calling on volunteers to help with coordinating the provision of nutrition support.
- NASCEE has been involved in the emerging forum of education funding partnerships.
- There has been a joint research boot camp with stakeholders from academia, DHET, DBE and NGOs undertaking research in 12 areas relating to COVID-19.

Presenting the view of Independent Philanthropy Association of South Africa (IPASA), Ms Gail Campbell expressed the support of the education development funding community. She highlighted existing partnerships within IPASA, the International Funders Group, and Corporate funders that are putting their heads together on how to support the response to the pandemic.

EIGHTEEN-MONTHS EDUCATION RECOVERY JOURNEY

In providing a proposed way forward, the CEO of the NECT, Mr Godwin Khosa, acknowledged the complexity surrounding the management of the Covid-19 pandemic and recognised the overwhelming support on the education response plan. He emphasised that there is a need for partners to change gear and proposed a eight-point road map comprising the following suggestions, proposed for an 18 month outlook:

1. Changed Ways of Working with Schools

Partners will not access schools the same way they did in the past. The protocols and the new priorities require all to change plans and ways of engaging. Additionally, there is a need for better coordination and dedicated points of contact at the national and provincial levels to ensure that support is well coordinated and properly channelled.

2. Clear Delineation of Support Areas

The key areas of support by non-governmental entities may need to include: health, school functionality, psychosocial support, nutritional support, infrastructure, learning, and an intelligence system to manage the developments.

3. Ensuring the Sustainability of NGOs

Funding partners should help to create a safety net for NGOs. Funding should be coordinated to resource the support plan in the next 6-12 months. We should avoid losing NGOs during the crisis period.

4. Improved Communication

It was suggested that we communicate every two weeks about progress in the sector. The NECT will work on the arrangement to ensure continuous communication going forward.

5. Utilising Existing Capacity to Support

It has been demonstrated that there is much capacity that lies outside of the DBE which is able to support the education response plan in a coordinated manner.

6. Ensuring Better Coordination

A 10-person team should be established to map out the support being provided by different organisations in order to avoid duplication of efforts and to improve coordination.

7. Supporting a National Intelligence System

As the health response is being pursued, the education response plan will succeed if it is based on relevant and live decision-making data. From schools, parents and the community benefitting from schools.

8. Questions, Comments and Recommendations

It was agreed that the NECT will receive questions and comments from the meeting and beyond that education stakeholders may need to the DBE to address.

EXPRESSIONS OF APPRECIATION FROM THE EDUCATION MINISTRY

The Minister, Mrs Angie Motshekga, was thankful for the spirit of Ubuntu, impressive cooperation and commitment to succeeding in the exercise before us. In appreciating the broad base of participants in the meeting, DBE Minister Angie Motshekga expressed gratitude to the members of the civil society for their support for enabling the Department “to be able to consult as widely as possible so that by the time we make the announcement after the President’s address on Thursday we will have had the benefit of guidance from a number of different people”. Similar, the deputy Minister of Basic Education expressed the ministry’s gratitude for the sense of partnership and commitment displayed by all to protect lives and learning.

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